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INTEGRATING READING AND WRITING IN ACADEMIC WRITING CLASS

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Abstract

Based on the theories and empirical data of the advantages of orchestrating integrated skills in the classroom and the connections between reading and writing skill, this study aims to find out the effects of integrated reading-writing instruction on students' writing ability. The moderating effect of cognitive styles was also investigated. The present study adopted a quasi-experimental design with 2 x 2 factorial analyses. The subjects of this study were 87 students at STKIP PGRI Jombang. An experimental group using integrated reading-writing instruction was randomly assigned for comparison with a group using a traditional teaching model. At first, the participants were asked to perform Group Embedded Figure Test (GEFT) to determine their cognitive styles. After that, the participants were asked to write an expository essay as the pre-test to justify that both groups had the same writing ability before the treatment. After seven meetings of treatment, they were asked to write another expository essay as the post-test. Based on ANOVA analyses, it was found that the students taught by using integrated reading-writing instruction did not achieve significantly better writing score than students taught by writing instruction only: neither for the field-independent students nor the field-dependent ones.

Keywords: integrated reading and writing, writing instruction, writing ability, cognitive styles

INTRODUCTION

There have been many studies trying to find ways to help students in minimizing the difficulties to improve the writing achievement of the students. However, most of the studies were carried out in the classroom in which writing was taught solely. It is quite common to teach English four

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skills as separate subjects. After several decades teaching those skills separately, one skill at a time, a trend of integrating skills has been taking place recently (Brown, 2007). The popularity of communicative language learning also promotes the importance of integrative tasks (Delaney, 2008).
It is believed that students will be advantaged to optimize their L2 communication when the skills are interwoven during instruction. By learning the skills in integrated lesson, students use the skills in meaningful tasks. Furthermore, integrating skills allow teachers to build new knowledge and skills on to what students already know and can do. Also, integrating the skills allows teachers to build in more variety into the lesson because the range of activities will be wider. This can raise the motivation of the students.

As teachers try to find the ways to improve the efficacy and efficiency of their instructional programs and practice in teaching writings, they may capitalize the integration of reading and writing instructions. Many studies have revealed that reading and writing are connected and these two skills have positive correlation (Perin ,1998; Palmer, 2010).
The research into reading–writing connections has taken three basic approaches (Tierney & Shanahan, 1991): rhetorical relations, shared knowledge, and procedural connections. The rhetorical approach is based on the idea that reading and writing are communication activities and that readers and writers gain insights about how communication works by being both sender and receiver.

The shared knowledge approach, the one that has attracted the most research attention is an analysis of the shared knowledge and cognitive processes between reading and writing. This approach is used in majority of research in the reading-writing connections (Koons, 2008). According to Fitzgerald and Shanahan (2000), both readers and writers rely on four common knowledge bases: domain or content knowledge, procedural knowledge, knowledge of specific features or components of written language, and metaknowledge.

The third approach treats reading and writing as functional activities that can be combined to accomplish external goals. This approach studies, usually through task analysis, how reading and writing can be used together. These studies have tended to emphasize the combination of reading and writing within academic tasks.

The positive correlation between reading and writing suggests that integrating the instruction of both skills will be more beneficial for both areas than teaching one of them in isolation. Through integrated reading-writing instruction, students will be given ample time to work with written texts through various activities. These activities serve as an experience for the students. Such an experience is important in students' writing

development. As it is suggested by constructivism learning theory proposed by Jean Piaget. As students read, they think about what they read and respond to the author's ideas orally and in writing. Furthermore, in reading as writer activity, students do not only question what is the message being conveyed by the writer, but also ask how the writer convey his/her intended meaning in his/her writing (Peha, 2003). They learn to see literature as an example of writing, and they observe how skilled authors used words and how they express their ideas (Tiedt, Gibbs, Timpson, & Williams, 1989). By presenting multiple instances of writing products and having the students identify the common features of the instances, teachers can help the learners develop their schemata about writing (Byrnes, 2009). Therefore, this model places reading skills at the center of effective writing.

Furthermore, individual differences of learners are believed to be an important matter in the design, development and implementation of instructional materials. These individual differences may affect the effectiveness of learning since each individual has preferred ways of acquiring, structuring and processing information. One of the individual differences that may influence students' writing and the process of learning to write is students' cognitive style. Cognitive style has been reported to be one of the significant factors that may impact students' achievement on various school subjects (Cakan, 2001).

Numerous studies have explored the importance of learners' cognitive style in language teaching and learning. In terms of language learning, some studies have reported that students with different cognitive styles have different language achievement (Ebrahimi, Zeynali and Dodman, 2013; Shan and Niannian, 2006; Sadeghi, Khonbi and Langroudy, 2013; Maghsudi, 2007)

Considering the available theories and the results of the previous studies, the current study is aimed to find out the effectiveness of elaborated reading tasks on students' writing skill by taking into account students' different cognitive styles. Thus, research problems of the study were formulated as follows:

1. Do students taught using integrated reading-writing instruction achieve higher score than those who are taught using writing instruction only?
2. Do field-independent students achieve higher score than the field-dependent students taught by using integrated reading-writing instruction and writing instruction only?
3. Is there any interaction between integrated reading-writing instruction with different cognitive styles?

METHOD

Subjects and Setting

The population of the study is the third semester students of the English Department Students of STKIP PGRI Jombang which consisted of about 126 students that were divided in three classes. Class A and class B were the accessible classes which consisted of almost the same number of students. Class A consists of 48 students, while class B consists of 47 students. C class consists of fewer students than class A and class B: 31 students. Moreover, the students in class A and class B were taught by the same lecturer in the previous Writing course, while students in C class were taught by different lecturer.

Instruments

The present study employed Group Embedded Figure Test (GEFT) to measure students' cognitive styles and writing tests to measure students' writing ability.

Group Embedded Figures Test (GEFT), developed by Witkin, et al. (1971), is a psychological test used to measure the sensitivity of a particular individual toward his/her surroundings. It has been reported to enjoy a Spearman-Brown reliability coefficient of 0.82 (Witkin, et al., 1971). Based on the number of correct answers given by students, the scores on GEFT may range from 0 (the most FD) to 18 (the most FI). Those who score above 12 out of 18 are labeled as FI and those with a score of 11 and less than 11 are branded as FD cognitive stylists.

The second instrument was a direct writing test to measure the students' writing ability. In the test, students were asked to write an expository essay with comparison-contrast development which consists of 5 paragraphs (about 750 words) in 100 minutes. The students were asked to choose one of the three choices of topics in the writing prompt. There were different choices of topic in the pre-test and post-test writing prompt.

The reliability of the data was confirmed by inter-rater reliability which was analyzed by Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Intraclass Correlation Coeeficient. The computation of correlations using Pearson Product Moments reports that the reliability coefficient is .893, which indicated a high level of reliability between first and second raters. The Intraclass Correlation Coefficient measurement shows a high reliability of individual rater by reliability coefficient .857.

Design and Procedure

To get the precise measurement of the possible effect of integrated reading-writing instruction on students' writing ability, a quasi experimental research with 2 x 2 factorial analyses was conducted. There was one dependent variable, one independent variable and one moderate variable in the present study. The independent variable of this study was a kind of instruction in teaching writing; integrated reading-writing instruction. The dependent variable, the observed and measured variable of this research is students' writing ability. In addition, students' cognitive style; field-dependent and field-independent, served as a moderate variable.

All of the participants first completed Group Embedded Figure Test (GEFT). The researcher scored the instrument and categorized the participants into FD and FI students. After completing the GEFT and pre-test, the students were given the treatments for seven meetings. The students in experimental group were taught by using integrated reading-writing instruction which consisted of four phases (b*uilding the context,* d*econstruction of the model text,* j*oint construction of text,* and *independent construction of text*).In the control group, the students were taught by using conventional instruction used by the teachers in teaching writing in STKIP PGRI Jombang. The procedure includes brainstorming, planning, drafting, revising and editing. After given a treatment for seven meetings, the students were asked to complete the post-test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis of GEFT score, the researcher found that 16 students in experimental group belong to Field Independence students and the other 27 students belonged to Field Dependent Students. In control group, 17 students were categorized as Field Independent students while 27 students were categorized as Field Dependent students.

TABLE 1
Summary of ANOVA Analysis

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Treatment	13.363	1	13.363	.187	.666
CognitiveStyle	77.025	1	77.025	1.078	.302
Treatment * CognitiveStyle	6.163	1	6.163	.086	.770

From the results of the ANOVA analysis, we can elaborate some information. Firstly, that the writing ability of the students taught by using

integrated reading-writing was not better than those who were taught by writing instructions only. Secondly, it informs that that field-independent students did not have better writing ability than field – dependent students both taught by integrated-reading instruction and writing instruction only. Thirdly, there is no interaction effect between integrated reading-writing instruction and cognitive style difference. It means that the treatment gave the same insignificant effects in all kinds of cognitive styles and the cognitive style was also found to have insignificant effects in both types of instructions.

This ineffectiveness may be caused by the low English proficiency of the students as the positive relationship of reading skill and writing skill is different by students' level of proficiency. Their mastery of English rules was not stable and established yet. Therefore, when they were given the model essay, they also struggled to understand the model essay. This phenomenon explains why the exposure to model reading cannot facilitate a better writing.

The ineffectiveness of the instruction can also be analyzed from the perspective of SLA theories. Apparently, the learning process was dominated by activities in which the teacher discussed the model essays more on the formal structure of the essay. However, Krashen's SLA theories believe that the acquired rules initiate the production, whereas the learned rules serve only as a monitor when it is needed (Krashen's Monitor Hypothesis). Therefore, the students need more practice and use to make the learned rules acquired. However, it is apparent that the students spent more time in the reading activities and had a few opportunities to practice their writing skills. Unfortunately, the condition made the students have a very little opportunity to develop their acquired knowledge from analyzing the model essays into writing.

The results of this study also revealed that FI students did not get better writing scores than FD students. This phenomenon is predicted as the results of some factors. The first is due to the low proficiency of the students. In his study, Salmani (2006) suggested that cognitive styles imposed their strongest effects on test performance when test takers were more proficient. Thus, it is reasonable if we cannot observe the effects of cognitive styles in low-proficient test takers.

Another factor that may affect the effect of cognitive styles on students' writing ability is the instructions. Review of previous studies suggested that FD learners experience learning problems when the focus of the lesson was on abstract concepts. They are also more likely to face difficulties in restructuring new information. In contrast, FI students are observed to have the ability to reorganize the information. Fortunately, in this study, the researcher gave explicit explanation and organization of the

lesson. The researcher frequently explained the materials by using spider web or box and arrows. This explicit organization could focus the learners' attention on the concept and help them unify the information. It means that FD students were facilitated during the teaching and learning process. Therefore, FD students might have fewer problems in understanding the concepts and eventually performed as well as FI students.

Moreover, in the instruction, the researcher also asked the students to work in groups or pairs. FD learners are reported to prefer to learn in social settings which involve interaction while FI learners tend to work effectively in autonomous environment (Saracho, 1989). Consequently, the integration of individual activities and group or pair activities during the lesson could help both kinds of students. These facts may explain why there was no difference on writing achievement of FD and FI students.

Furthermore, even though the statistics calculation did not show a significant effect of integrated reading-writing instruction on students' writing ability, the researcher believes that the integrated reading-writing instruction can still be an alternative technique to teach writing. Although the mean scores of students taught using integrated reading-writing instruction is just slightly higher than the scores of students taught using conventional writing instruction only, the integrated reading-writing instruction can be said to have positive effect on students' writing development. It can be seen from the improvement of students' writing scores from the pre-test to the post-test. Moreover, the students show positive perception toward the implementation of integrated reading-writing instruction in their writing class. Twenty three students out of twenty five students who filled an informal open-ended questionnaire said that the integrated reading-instruction influenced their writing ability. Some of them said that, this instruction made them in preparing their writing as they know what and how they are going to write from the model essays. Some students said that this instruction helped them in brainstorming and developing ideas before writing. Some other students also said that the integration of reading in writing instruction made their writing become more organized since they had the guideline and examples of good essays.

CONCLUSION AND SUGESTION

Based on the results of the data analysis, there are some conclusions that can be drawn. First, no matter what the students' cognitive styles were, there was no significant effect of integrated reading-writing instruction on students' writing ability. In addition, it could also be said that the insignificant effect of integrated reading-writing instruction was not influenced by the existence of students' different cognitive styles.

However, the researcher insists that the findings should be interpreted very carefully or in a more positive way. Although the statistical data showed that the integrated reading-writing instruction did not result in a better outcome compared with that in the conventional instruction, this does not mean that this instruction has no value at all. As can be seen, the students showed positive view about this instruction and there was equal improvement of FI and FD learners which means that the integrated reading-writing instruction could be helpful for FD learners too. Thus, both integrated reading-writing instruction and writing instruction only can be viewed as equal and have their own strengths in improving students' writing ability.

Based on the results of this study, the researcher acknowledged some limitations of the study. First, the researcher could not control the level of proficiency of the subjects. Second, the researcher could not maximally exploit the reading instructions and writing instruction in a suitable proportion.

To give practical suggestion, the teachers should be aware of how students' ability in one skill or one aspect of language is related to the ability of other skills. It implies that the development of one skill requires the development of other skills. Moreover, even though the statistical analysis of this study did not suggest the significant effect of integrated reading-writing instruction on students' writing ability, the teacher are still suggested to apply this technique with some notes. The teacher should give balance on the form focus discussion and the content of the model essays. Then, the teacher should facilitate the students to acquire the writing skills by providing more opportunities for the students to practice and use their knowledge and skills.

Finally, the results of this study suggested further research to be conducted. Language proficiency of the students seems to affect the results of the study. Therefore, further research investigating the effectiveness of integrated reading-writing instruction should be done in different level of proficiency. Then, the further researcher can analyze the effect of integrated of reading-writing instruction on different aspects of writing, such as organization and content, separately by utilizing more focused instrument. Considering the positive correlation of reading and writing, future researcher is also recommended to investigate the effect of integrated reading-writing instruction on students' reading proficiency. Nevertheless, as this experimental study does not reveal the effectiveness of integrated reading-writing instruction on students' writing ability, further researcher is recommended to conduct a Classroom Action Research (CAR) to find out how integrated reading-writing instruction can improve students' reading ability.

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